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CIA

Internal Friction

Things are not going well within the CIA, and it is not going unnoticed at the White House according to informed sources.

Friction is common at various working levels at the agency, and what has evolved since the Nixon Administration took over is a classic battle between the "generalists" and the "experts."

Throughout its history, CIA has tried to play honest broker, fending off the sometimes biased use of intelligence by the Pentagon and State Department. All in all, it has been pretty successful. Sometimes, however, and with alarming frequency lately, CIA has not done well, showing up on critical issues as merely an "also ran."

Experts Not Allowed to Speak

Government Executive's sources indicate that CIA's experts (and it has some of the best in Government) are not being allowed to speak. Many of the persons with indepth knowledge and virtually unassailable judgment and proven records of performance are simply out of the mainstream.

This is due largely to the fact that many of their substantive views are not in accord with the more conventional views of the management. The sources reveal that on many of the crucial issues lately—the SS-9, the ABM and Vietnam—the experts have had the guts to disagree with the popular concepts.

The management, however, employs the age-old bureaucratic mechanism of the conference to muzzle the experts. By this process everyone remotely concerned with a problem has to agree to the final version of a study.

The theory is to bring in the best ideas from everyone. The fallacy in this, however, lies in the fact that not everyone is equally capable or perceptive.

Sources state that lately what may have started out to be a piece of penetrating insight into a crucial question more often than not turns out to be a wishy-washy, "maybe it will" and "maybe it won't" type of nonintelligence. Some of the recent studies reportedly have covered every possibility 10 men can think of without saying just what it is that could really happen.

One of the reasons behind this difference of views stems from professional approach. First-rate analysts have built up an understanding of a problem through years of close association with it. They understand the nuances and background to the problem and, in effect, are capable of thinking like the enemy thinks.

In many cases this type of thinking defies conventional American logic. Vietnam is a good example. American

logic demanded that the Tet Offensive of 1968 was a military failure; North Vietnamese logic, on the other hand, viewed it as a success, and our sources indicate that analysts at CIA said so.

First-rate intelligence requires first-rate people, people who are unafraid of questioning the conventional wisdom and taking a stance. These are the people who should be making the intelligence judgments and not the senior officer present.

But, Government Executive's sources indicate that the management in certain production areas at CIA has cultivated a breed of generalists who have been elevated from analyst jobs to positions where their hard-gained expertise is soon lost. They adhere to the concept that a man worth his salt can do anything, and thus they have taken to shifting men to different management responsibilities over substantive production, with little regard for the man's preference or substantive skill.

Our sources, some of whom have been in intelligence for a number of years, are angry. They claim that the greatest single asset of the CIA is its people who know and understand a problem area. It is not, they claim, the so-called managers who would prefer to make generalists out of first-rate analysts.

Young Staffers' Solution

Younger staffers with whom Government Executive spoke voiced similar complaints but have a different solution. They leave! They revealed that they came to CIA thinking of it as something different... apart from the bureaucratic world. But they confess that it's as bad as anyone could imagine—a gigantic bureaucracy.

Understandably Government Executive cannot reveal its sources, but can state that they represent a cross section of young and old from the CIA. They are not simply "cranks," most are dedicated professionals.

The primary purpose of intelligence in their view is to provide the President with sufficient information about a development in foreign affairs which will permit the formulation of a position or policy in time to effectively cope with the situation. In this type of situation, intelligence which warns and assesses the seriousness of an event before it happens is highly prized. Obviously the staffers with whom Government Executive talked feel this is not happening these days.

Communication Needed

They report that the White House finally reacted to the kinds of intelligence the agency was issuing. Henry A. Kissinger, White House Assistant for National Security Affairs, now only wants the judgments. The CIA people feel that

this is a bit pretentious of Kissinger. He is not an expert in all areas of the world, they claim.

They hope that Kissinger and his staff will look into the problems within CIA, however, in their view, it would not take a great deal of effort to determine who the real experts are in the community and who the managers are. There should be communication between these experts and the policy-makers in the view of many staffers at CIA, but they are unable to do anything about it themselves.

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VIEWPOINT

Defense Intelligence: Calling Nixon's Bluff wow

IT IS PERHAPS UNFAIR to remind President Nixon that during his campaign he vowed to abolish the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) if elected. We realize that this was an overstatement at best. Underlying his statement, however, was an apparent realization on either his part, or one of his staff, of the actual conditions at the Pentagon's intelligence component.

Former Secretary of Defense McNamara, soon after taking office in 1961, realized that he was faced with a problem of vested interests in intelligence reports crossing his desk. At that time, DOD intelligence matters were handled separately by the three services.

It is not inaccurate to say that each of the services emphasized those aspects of intelligence which best suited its interests and budgetary needs. We had a missile gap; we had no missile gap.

To remedy the situation, McNamara created DIA, a joint service national intelligence agency that conceivably would take a broader view and set aside the interests of the individual services. It didn't work, however, because each service retained an intelligence staff which has slowly grown larger and larger.

What resulted was the imposition of another bastard child in the form of DIA which constantly fights the service intelligence staffs who tailor their intelligence to justify their operations.

McNamara was on the right track and superficial changes occurred. The tune and flavor of the one daily report did change. He no longer got three versions of the same story. Some improvements were noted, but with interservice disagreement rampant on most crucial intelligence questions, the DIA never mustered sufficient courage to meet these problems head-on. Instead, a slow, subtle deterioration set in at DIA and the art of compromise reigned supreme.

The result over the years has been a product renowned in intelligence circles as intelligence "to the least common denominator."

Crucial questions are tackled in studies, but the studies, long on detail, always manage to finesse past taking a position. Judgments are softened or avoided altogether. Ambiguity characterizes most reports filtering up to the Secretary of Defense and his staff.

Vietnam more than any other experience proved the futility of a joint service approach to intelligence. McNamara and Clifford finally gave up and went to CIA for answers. Air Force career officers on the DIA staff in particular, at times, became almost paranoid when forced to comment on the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the U.S. bombing against North Vietnam. Army officers were

faced with the same problem trying to assess the military significance of the Tet offensive.

Perhaps the major source of the difficulties that plague DIA is the fact that it is totally a military organization. Consider what the prospects of going to DIA appear like to a career Army or Air Force officer. He knows that he will be thrust into a position when, on occasion, his professional judgment will vary markedly from his parent service. He will be expected to defend a position that could enrage the Chief of Staff of his parent service—and the men who do such things get known pretty quickly in the service.

Frankly, it seems too great a task to force a loyal Air Force or Army officer to accept such a responsibility.

Consider also that a tour at DIA for a military officer is three, maybe four years. In a 20- to 30-year military career that is a very short period. Is it fair to ask him to accept a responsibility that conceivably could damage his career?

These are the kinds of questions with which the career military officers grapple during their tours at DIA. Well over 90 percent of these men are human, with normal aspirations and career goals, and silently, individually and even subconsciously they resign themselves to "sweating out" their tour, not making waves and playing every situation by ear. The result: intelligence to the least common denominator.

There is a way to solve the problem and Melvin Laird has exhibited an interest in doing just that. He has asked his Assistant Secretary of Defense for Administration, Robert L. Froehle, to take a hard look at DOD intelligence.

Unless this man falls prey to the color slide briefings he'll be given at DIA, he might recognize the definite conflict of interest that torments the military officers there. In case he does miss the subtle conflict, we suggest that Laird seriously consider creating an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, staff the command levels of DIA with career civilians who have far less vested interest in a particular branch of service, create a separate J-2 organization to staff the JCS intelligence needs and do away with or restrict the size of the service intelligence staffs.

Last month Froehle was told by Laird to make changes in the management of intelligence functions within Defense. It seems to us that the responsibilities given to Froehle amount to little more than another Defense Department study when an organizational shake-up is really needed.

These changes, which probably would be welcomed with relief by individual military officers, could result in a Defense intelligence organization that finally accepts its national responsibilities and provides the Secretary of Defense with meaningful, timely and realistic reports on which to base policy.

MEMORANDUM FOR: Jack

This case has been turned over to
the IG by the Director.

Ed

17 October 1969

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FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
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